

BENJAMIN F. BOLLINGER, ALIAS BENJAMIN BELL.

APRIL 20, 1904.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. SAMUEL W. SMITH, from the Committee on Invalid Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany S. 3915.]

The Committee on Invalid Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (S. 3915) granting an increase of pension to Benjamin F. Bollinger, alias Benjamin Bell, have examined the same and adopt the Senate report thereon and recommend that the bill do pass.

[Senate Report No. 1992, Fifty-eighth Congress, second session.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (S. 3915) granting an increase of pension to Benjamin F. Bollinger, have examined the same and report:

Benjamin F. Bollinger, alias Benjamin Bell, served as private in Company C, Seventy-ninth Pennsylvania Infantry, from September 20, 1861, to October 1, 1862. He reenlisted October 7, 1862, and served as private in Company L, Tenth Ohio Cavalry, until May 30, 1865, when honorably discharged on account of disability from gunshot wound of right arm received in battle.

Claimant is now pensioned under the general law at the rate of \$30 per month on account of disability from gunshot wound of right arm, chronic diarrhea and resulting disease of rectum, lame back, and rheumatism and resulting disease of heart, incurred during his service, and his claim for increase filed at the Bureau October 24, 1895, was rejected March 11, 1901.

In addition to his pensioned disabilities, claimant also suffers from total blindness, which he claimed was due to disease of eyes contracted during his service. This claim was rejected by the Bureau, and the rejection affirmed at the Department of the Interior, the holding being that:

"The claim for additional pension on account of disease of eyes, originally alleged in 1889, and again in 1891, as a result of rheumatism, one of the causes of disability for which claimant is pensioned, and subsequently in 1895, alleged as a result of an attack of measles in the service in 1862 was properly rejected, as the only disease of eyes of any consequence shown to exist in this case upon expert examination is glaucoma, which though the etiology thereof is admitted to be obscure could not have been due to either of said alleged causes. Neither could its origin or existence at any time be determined by lay testimony, the only kind of evidence upon that point furnished by the claimant or adduced upon special examination."

The evidence on file shows that claimant became totally blind about 1898, thirty-six years subsequent to the date when it is alleged he incurred disease of eyes. His

blindness is due to glaucoma, a disease about the origin of which little is known, but which the medical authorities unite in saying does not exist for so long a period before reaching its almost invariable end, namely, total blindness.

The blindness in this case is not proved to have been due to the military service, and the rejection of the claim appears correct. However this may be, he is totally blind, and is also incapacitated for manual labor by reason of disabilities incurred in service and for which he is pensioned, and the evidence shows him to be poor and needy, without means of support for himself and wife except his pension.

In view of claimant's long and faithful service, his blindness and helplessness, and his great poverty, your committee are of opinion that an increase of his pension to \$50 per month may very properly be provided.

The bill is therefore reported back favorably with a recommendation that it pass.

O